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**AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGES IN TEXAS: THIRD QUARTER 2005**

**Dallas County Pay Level Leads the State;  
Counties Along Texas-Mexico Border Among the Lowest Paid in the Nation**

In the third quarter of 2005, Dallas County's weekly wage averaged \$940, highest among the 24 Texas counties with 75,000 or more jobs. At the lower end of the wage scale were a number of counties along the Texas-Mexico border. Regional Commissioner Stanley W. Suchman noted that at \$486 per week, the average weekly wage in Cameron County was not only the lowest among Texas' large counties, but also the lowest among the 322 large counties nationwide. The national average weekly wage in the third quarter of 2005 was \$777.

Dallas County was not the only one in Texas with an average weekly wage exceeding \$900 in the third quarter of 2005; Harris County averaged \$930 per week and Collin County, \$913. All three counties placed in the top fifty of the national ranking by pay level with Dallas, Harris, and Collin at 36<sup>th</sup>, 39<sup>th</sup>, and 46<sup>th</sup>, respectively. (See table 1.) Four other large Texas counties (Travis, Fort Bend, Tarrant, and Williamson) reported weekly wages above the national average.

Wages in the 17 remaining large counties in Texas were below that of the nation, although several (Montgomery, Brazoria, and Jefferson) were within 10 percent of the U.S. average. Three of the five lowest-paying large counties in the nation were located in Texas – all along the border with Mexico. Average weekly wages in Cameron (\$486), Hidalgo (\$499), and Webb (\$525) Counties ranked 322<sup>nd</sup>, 321<sup>st</sup>, and 318<sup>th</sup> in the U.S. Other counties in Texas that ranked close to the bottom in average weekly wages included the border county of El Paso (315<sup>th</sup>) and the interior counties of Brazos (317<sup>th</sup>), Lubbock (308<sup>th</sup>), and Bell (306<sup>th</sup>).

**Hurricanes Katrina and Rita**

The measures of employment and wages reported in this news release reflect the impact of Hurricane Katrina and ongoing labor market trends. Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005, with catastrophic effects in parts of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. This event occurred after the August QCEW reference period and before the September period. Its effects are first reflected in the September QCEW employment counts and the wage totals for the third quarter of 2005. QCEW nonresponse adjustment methods were modified for September 2005 to better reflect the impact of the hurricane in parts of Louisiana and Mississippi. For more information, see the Katrina coverage on the BLS Web site (<http://www.bls.gov/katrina/qcewquestions.htm>).

Hurricane Rita made landfall September 24, after the September reference period. The impact of this event did not warrant changes to QCEW methodology for the third quarter of 2005.

## Average Weekly Wages in Texas, Third Quarter 2005 (continued)

Among the 322 largest counties in the nation, New York County, N.Y., recorded the highest average weekly wage at \$1,419. Santa Clara, Calif., was second with an average weekly wage of \$1,403, followed by Arlington, Va. (\$1,292), and San Mateo, Calif. (\$1,268). Three of the 10 counties with the highest wages in the U.S. were located in the greater New York metropolitan area (New York, N.Y., Fairfield, Conn., and Somerset, N.J.), 3 others were located in or around the San Francisco area (Santa Clara, San Francisco, and San Mateo, all in California), while 3 more were located in or around the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area (Arlington, Va., Fairfax, Va., and Washington, D.C.). Rounding out the top 10 was Suffolk County, Mass., part of the Boston metropolitan area.

Joining the Texas counties of Cameron, Hidalgo, and Webb among the five lowest-paid large counties in the nation were the counties of Horry, S.C. (\$505/320<sup>th</sup>) and Yakima, Wash. (\$525/318<sup>th</sup>) in the third quarter of 2005.

At the state level, the average weekly wage in Texas was \$767, just below the \$777 national average. (See table 2.) Despite a lower than average weekly wage, Texas placed 17<sup>th</sup> highest in the nationwide ranking. Nationally, the four highest wage levels were in the District of Columbia (\$1,265), Connecticut (\$966), Massachusetts (\$947), and New York (\$941). Average weekly wages in this group were more than 20 percent above the U.S. average. At the other end of the scale, four states had wages 75 percent or less of national earnings: Montana (\$563), South Dakota (\$567), Mississippi (\$573), and North Dakota (\$581).

### Over-the-year changes

While 7 of the 24 large counties in Texas registered pay levels above the national average, 9 recorded wage growth that exceeded the national increase of 6.1 percent. Fort Bend County, led the State with an average weekly wage gain of 15.4 percent between the third quarter of 2004 and the third quarter of 2005. Fort Bend's wage gain ranked second highest among the nation's 322 largest counties. Montgomery County followed with a wage increase of 10.5 percent which ranked ninth nationally. Harris County, which recorded the second highest wage level in Texas, had the State's third fastest wage gain, 7.8 percent; nationally, this percentage increase ranked in the top 50 (47<sup>th</sup>).

Two of the lowest-paid counties in the State (Webb and Lubbock) ranked in the top-half of all U.S. counties in wage growth. Average weekly wages rose 6.1 percent in both counties, equaling the U.S. average and ranking 133<sup>rd</sup>. In contrast, Brazos County, which ranked in the bottom 10 nationally in wages (317<sup>th</sup>), was almost as slow in wage growth (306<sup>th</sup>) recording a 1.7-percent wage gain. Cameron County, the lowest-paid county in the State as well as the nation, also posted a below-average gain, 3.6 percent, and ranked 279<sup>th</sup>.

Among all counties, Passaic, N.J., led the nation in growth in average weekly wages, with an increase of 19.0 percent in the third quarter of 2005. As previously noted, Fort Bend, Texas, was second (15.4 percent), followed by the counties of Boulder, Colo. (13.8 percent), and San Mateo, Calif., and Harrison, Miss. (12.7 percent each). The percentage increases in wages for both Harrison, Miss., and Orleans, La. (10.7 percent), were boosted as a result of the disproportionate job and pay losses in lower-paid industries following Hurricane Katrina. Five counties experienced over-the-year declines in average weekly wages. Clayton County, Ga., had the largest decrease, -5.1 percent, followed by the counties of Benton, Ark. (-1.2 percent), Trumbull, Ohio (-0.6 percent), Saginaw, Mich. (-0.4 percent), and St. Joseph, Ind. (-0.1 percent).

## Average Weekly Wages in Texas, Third Quarter 2005 (continued)

Between the third quarter of 2004 and the third quarter of 2005, statewide average weekly wages in Texas rose 6.7 percent, compared to the national advance of 6.1 percent. The Texas increase placed the State's wage growth in the top quarter (12<sup>th</sup>) nationally. Arizona led the U.S. with an over-the-year wage gain of 8.2 percent, followed closely by Florida and Wyoming, at 8.1 and 8.0 percent, respectively. Virginia and Maryland, two states that ranked in the top 10 in level of pay, also ranked in the top 10 in wage growth with increases of 7.7 and 7.6 percent, respectively. On the other hand, Montana, the state with the lowest average weekly wage in the nation, saw wages grow by 7.4 percent over the year—sixth highest nationally.

Michigan and Rhode Island tied for the slowest wage gains in the nation at 4.1 percent. Ranked among the top three in wages in the U.S., both the District of Columbia and Massachusetts experienced the second slowest growth in wages in the third quarter of 2005, 4.5 percent.

### Industry detail

Average weekly wages by industry supersector are available for two of Texas' large counties, Harris and Dallas, the 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> largest counties in the U.S., respectively.

In Harris County, the natural resources and mining industry supersector reported the highest average weekly wage at \$2,409, more than three times the U.S. average. (See table 3.) Locally, the wage level in natural resources and mining was more than twice as high as the average wage in the next four highest-paying supersectors: manufacturing (\$1,188), information (\$1,152), financial activities (\$1,127), and professional and business services (\$1,062). Partially reflecting its relatively large share of part-time employment, the lowest-paying supersector both nationally and locally was leisure and hospitality, averaging \$356 per week in Harris County in the third quarter of 2005. Over-the-year wage increases in Harris County ranged from a robust 18.3 percent in natural resources and mining to 2.7 percent in education and health services. Nationwide, natural resources and mining also led all supersectors with a 12.1-percent advance in wages; however, this industry was the fourth lowest-paying in the country at \$732 per week. Nationally, information had the highest average weekly wage at \$1,207, followed by financial activities with a wage of \$1,113.

The natural resources and mining supersector in Dallas County also had the highest average weekly wage, \$2,432. Exhibiting a pattern similar to that of Harris County, the next four highest-paying supersectors in Dallas County also had wages well below that for natural resources and mining, but still averaged more than \$1,000. The rank order of these four industries, however, was different between the two counties. In Dallas County, information (\$1,257) had the second highest weekly wage, followed by financial activities (\$1,213), manufacturing (\$1,135), and professional and business services (\$1,021). Leisure and hospitality was the lowest-paying supersector in Dallas at \$429 per week; still, the Dallas wage was nearly 30 percent higher than the U.S. industry average of \$331. Locally, the fastest over-the-year wage growth occurred in manufacturing with a gain of 12.3 percent while government had the slowest increase in wages, 4.0 percent.

Average weekly wage data by county are compiled under the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program, also known as the ES-202 program. The data are derived from reports submitted by employers subject to unemployment insurance (UI) laws. The 8.6 million employer reports cover 132.9 million full- and part-time jobs. The average weekly wage is computed by dividing the total quarterly payroll of employees covered by UI programs by the

## Average Weekly Wages in Texas, Third Quarter 2005 (continued)

average monthly number of these employees. This number then is divided by 13, the number of weeks in a quarter. It is to be noted, therefore, that over-the-year wage changes for geographic areas may reflect shifts in the composition of employment by industry, occupation, and such other factors as hours of work. Thus, wages may vary among counties, metropolitan areas, or states for reasons other than changes in the average wage level. Data for all states, Metropolitan Statistical Areas, counties, and the nation are available on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/>; however, data in QCEW press releases have been adjusted (see Note below) and may not match the data contained on the Bureau's Web site.

### Additional statistics and other information

An annual bulletin, *Employment and Wages*, features comprehensive information by detailed industry on establishments, employment, and wages for the nation and all states. The 2004 edition of this bulletin contains selected data produced by Business Employment Dynamics (BED) on job gains and losses, as well as selected data from the fourth quarter 2004 version of this news release. *Employment and Wages Annual Averages, 2004* is now available for sale from the United States Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250, telephone 866-512-1800, outside of Washington, D.C. Within Washington, D.C., the telephone number is 202-512-1800. The fax number is 202-512-2104. Also, the 2004 bulletin is available in a portable document format (PDF) on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn04.htm>.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; TDD message referral phone number: 1-800-877-8339.

For personal assistance or further information on the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) Program, as well as other Bureau programs, contact the Dallas Information Office at 214-767-6970 from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. CT. This release is available in text and PDF format on the Dallas BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/ro6/home.htm>. Users may also obtain the release from the Bureau's fax-on-demand service in Dallas by dialing 214-767-9613 and requesting document number 9560.

### NOTE

QCEW data are the sums of individual establishment records reflecting the number of establishments that exist in a county or industry at a point in time. For this reason, county and industry data are not designed to be used as a time series.

The preliminary QCEW data presented in this release may differ from data released by the individual states as well as from the data presented on the BLS Web site. The potential differences result from several causes. Differences between BLS and State published data may be due to the continuing receipt, review, and editing of UI data over time. On the other hand, differences between data in this release and the data found on the BLS Web site are the result of adjustments made to improve over-the-year comparisons. Specifically, these adjustments account for administrative (noneconomic) changes such as a correction to a previously reported location or industry classification. Adjusting for these administrative changes allows users to more accurately assess changes of an economic nature (such as a firm moving from one county to another or changing its primary economic activity) over a 12-month period. Currently, adjusted data are available only from BLS press releases.

**Table 1. Covered (1) employment and wages in the United States and the 24 largest counties in Texas, third quarter 2005 (2)**

Area	Employment	Average Weekly Wage (3)			
	September 2005 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level (4)	Percent change, third quarter 2004-05 (5)	National ranking by percent change (4)
United States (6)	132,929.3	\$777	--	6.1	--
Texas	9,659.3	767	17	6.7	12
Bell, Texas	94.4	596	306	4.4	248
Bexar, Texas	677.9	675	236	5.0	213
Brazoria, Texas	80.1	719	175	4.7	232
Brazos, Texas	82.6	551	317	1.7	306
Cameron, Texas	117.0	486	322	3.6	279
Collin, Texas	250.4	913	46	6.9	86
Dallas, Texas	1,431.1	940	36	6.6	105
Denton, Texas	149.5	687	214	6.7	98
El Paso, Texas	260.1	558	315	5.5	174
Fort Bend, Texas	111.0	860	64	15.4	2
Galveston, Texas	87.7	671	242	4.7	232
Harris, Texas	1,882.0	930	39	7.8	47
Hidalgo, Texas	196.2	499	321	5.1	209
Jefferson, Texas	117.7	711	184	6.9	86
Lubbock, Texas	120.2	590	308	6.1	133
McLennan, Texas	101.9	627	285	5.4	188
Montgomery, Texas	104.8	727	167	10.5	9
Nueces, Texas	147.2	654	262	7.4	59
Potter, Texas	72.0	631	282	5.3	194
Smith, Texas	89.7	680	229	5.4	188
Tarrant, Texas	719.8	789	104	5.8	153
Travis, Texas	531.0	882	54	6.7	98
Webb, Texas	82.2	525	318	6.1	133
Williamson, Texas	102.0	785	105	5.9	149

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

(3) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(4) Ranking does not include the county of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

(5) Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for noneconomic county reclassifications.

(6) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

**Table 2. Covered (1) employment and wages by state, third quarter 2005 (2)**

State	Employment	Average weekly wage (3)			
	September 2005 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, third quarter 2004-05	National ranking by percent change
United States (4)	132,929.3	\$777	-	6.1	-
Alabama	1,905.9	669	32	6.4	17
Alaska	320.2	797	13	5.6	30
Arizona	2,511.8	748	20	8.2	1
Arkansas	1,165.7	599	46	4.9	43
California	15,443.3	887	6	7.0	8
Colorado	2,212.1	808	11	7.3	7
Connecticut	1,655.2	966	2	5.3	38
Delaware	420.1	823	9	7.0	8
District of Columbia	666.4	1,265	1	4.5	48
Florida	7,801.6	708	26	8.1	2
Georgia	3,960.8	748	20	5.2	40
Hawaii	606.0	714	24	5.8	23
Idaho	635.5	605	45	6.0	19
Illinois	5,820.7	825	8	5.9	21
Indiana	2,916.3	689	29	5.2	40
Iowa	1,461.1	641	37	6.1	18
Kansas	1,315.3	659	34	6.5	15
Kentucky	1,779.5	651	35	5.2	40
Louisiana	1,770.8	637	39	6.9	10
Maine	606.0	631	42	4.6	46
Maryland	2,526.5	854	7	7.6	5
Massachusetts	3,193.3	947	3	4.5	48
Michigan	4,353.1	787	15	4.1	50
Minnesota	2,671.9	790	14	4.9	43
Mississippi	1,098.4	573	49	5.9	21
Missouri	2,696.2	691	27	5.5	33
Montana	424.2	563	51	7.4	6
Nebraska	896.7	633	41	5.3	38
Nevada	1,242.5	750	19	6.7	12
New Hampshire	630.7	772	16	5.8	23
New Jersey	3,960.8	928	5	5.8	23
New Mexico	791.0	629	43	6.8	11
New York	8,394.8	941	4	5.7	26
North Carolina	3,903.7	690	28	5.7	26
North Dakota	335.4	581	48	6.0	19
Ohio	5,360.6	723	23	5.5	33
Oklahoma	1,482.5	612	44	5.7	26
Oregon	1,683.4	714	24	5.6	30
Pennsylvania	5,597.6	764	18	5.7	26
Rhode Island	488.9	736	22	4.1	50
South Carolina	1,831.2	637	39	5.6	30
South Dakota	381.6	567	50	5.4	35
Tennessee	2,724.0	689	29	4.6	46
Texas	9,659.3	767	17	6.7	12
Utah	1,135.1	647	36	6.6	14
Vermont	303.4	663	33	4.7	45
Virginia	3,617.7	815	10	7.7	4
Washington	2,820.6	801	12	6.5	15
West Virginia	702.9	589	47	5.4	35
Wisconsin	2,783.4	688	31	5.4	35
Wyoming	263.4	638	38	8.0	3
Puerto Rico	1,037.4	435	(5)	3.8	(5)
Virgin Islands	44.0	616	(5)	2.8	(5)

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

(3) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(4) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

(5) Data not included in the national ranking.

**Table 3. Covered (1) employment and wages in the United States, Harris County, Texas, and Dallas County, Texas, third quarter 2005 (2)**

Area and Supersector	Employment September 2005 (thousands)	Average weekly wage (3)	
		Average weekly wage	Percent change, 2004-05 (4)
United States (5).....	132,929.3	\$777	6.1
Private industry.....	111,846.5	770	6.4
Natural resources and mining.....	1,834.7	732	12.1
Construction.....	7,581.2	816	6.3
Manufacturing.....	14,218.1	946	5.3
Trade, transportation, and utilities.....	25,666.2	682	5.2
Information.....	3,057.1	1,207	8.3
Financial activities.....	8,084.8	1,113	7.1
Professional and business services.....	17,138.0	929	8.0
Education and health services.....	16,557.0	745	5.8
Leisure and hospitality.....	13,006.0	331	5.4
Other services.....	4,329.4	505	5.9
Government.....	21,082.9	817	4.6
Harris, TX.....	1,882.0	930	7.8
Private industry.....	1,636.5	944	8.3
Natural resources and mining.....	67.1	2,409	18.3
Construction.....	132.7	867	4.7
Manufacturing.....	169.9	1,188	10.2
Trade, transportation, and utilities.....	396.3	829	6.3
Information.....	32.1	1,152	7.7
Financial activities.....	117.1	1,127	7.0
Professional and business services.....	302.8	1,062	7.7
Education and health services.....	196.4	807	2.7
Leisure and hospitality.....	162.7	356	9.9
Other services.....	55.4	547	5.8
Government.....	245.5	837	4.6
Dallas, TX.....	1,431.1	940	6.6
Private industry.....	1,272.6	949	6.9
Natural resources and mining.....	7.3	2,432	10.3
Construction.....	78.4	856	8.4
Manufacturing.....	146.0	1,135	12.3
Trade, transportation, and utilities.....	301.8	895	5.2
Information.....	53.8	1,257	4.5
Financial activities.....	136.0	1,213	8.3
Professional and business services.....	250.9	1,021	5.7
Education and health services.....	134.0	901	5.1
Leisure and hospitality.....	122.6	429	5.7
Other services.....	38.5	606	5.2
Government.....	158.5	867	4.0

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

(3) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(4) Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for any noneconomic county reclassifications. See Technical Note.

(5) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.